

Ephesians 5:21-33

As Paul continues with the idea of being "imitators of God" and "walking in love", he gives instructions for relationships. He wanted all relationships to model submission, respect and sacrificial love "out of reverence for Christ."

Day 1 Relationships

Ephesians 5:21 NAS

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

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1. What command about all relationships comes *before* specific instructions about individual groupings? 5:21a

- What high standard did he give to submission? 5:21b

IT'S GREEK TO ME: *be subject/submit to* - *hupotasso* NT:5293, primarily a military term, "to rank under" (hupo, "under," *tasso*, "to arrange")...in the middle or passive voice, to subject oneself" - Vine's Expository Dictionary

"Submitting ('lining oneself up under') is in the present tense and middle voice, ...clearly noting that the action is by personal choice. The word definitely expresses the idea of voluntarily giving up your own rights and bowing your own will to another."
- The Study Bible for Women (1517)

"Submission means to leverage my power, my assets for your benefits because Christ leveraged His power and His assets for us."
- Andy Stanley from *Future Family, Ep 2 - Power Down*

2. Summarize instructions that Paul had given. Consider the effect each of these instructions would have on relationships.

- 4:2
- 4:25
- 4:26
- 4:28
- 4:29
- 4:31
- 4:32
- 5:1,2
- How does the command to "be subject to one another" (5:21) fit with these other commands?

3. How do you think being subject to or showing respect for one another demonstrates a “fear” (reverence/awe) for Christ?

4. Why would *mutual* submission be a powerful dynamic in any and all relationships?

- How can we have the ability to put others first? Ephesians 4:23; 5:18b
- How much power is available to do this with our relationships? 1:19

FYI: Submit “this verse clearly ties the truth about submission to the instructions on being filled with the Spirit... genuine submission from the heart is not possible apart from the Spirit’s empowering...”

Lawrence Richards explains that...

Submit (be subject) is a complex concept which needs to be defined by the context in which it is used. Here there is no question of power or of position, as we find in Romans 13. Here Paul calls for all believers to develop an attitude of submission, a willingness to be responsive and to yield to one another out of love.

One another (Allelon) is a reciprocal pronoun which denotes that the encouragement and edification is to be a mutual beneficial activity. As each one submits, encourages, loves, etc the other member, they both benefit.”

- preceptaustin.org

5. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Paul writes, *“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” (NIV)*

- What does Paul say motivates us? v. 14a
- When we truly understand and bask in Christ’s love, what effect should that have on our lives? v. 15

6. From Philippians 2:1-4:

- What attitude should we have toward others? 2:3,4
- Where should this come from? 2:1
- Whom are we imitating? 2:5

Food for Thought: "A lot of people - in their friendships, in their homes and in their marriages - deal with 'pan-scale' love. They get up in the morning and they put their friend or spouse's love on one side of the scale and they put their love on the other side and if their love goes down, that means they're loving that person more than they are being loved. So what's the answer? *Take some of yours away! You don't want to show more love to someone else than they give to you!!*

Do you have any idea where that's going to take you? What in the world is wrong with loving somebody more than they love you? To love people does make you vulnerable, but to love somebody puts you, for the first time in your life, in control of yourself."
- Dr. William Greenman

Applying the Word: *In what ways, if any, do you think your marriage or a friendship might change if you were focused on investing in it not for yourself but for Christ?*

What are some concrete ways you can think of to submit to that person/put them first this week? Write down your ideas, what you did, and the results.

Day 2

Ephesians 5:22-24 NAS

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Wives

7. To whom, specifically, is a wife is to submit? 5:22a

- What other people or worldly pressures might a woman feel the need to submit to mistakenly?

FYI: Wives, be subject/submit "This is a specific application given to women of a principle or teaching (5:21) given to everyone...Paul is giving one overarching principle and then applying it to everybody in the family - **mutual submission:** *everybody is to submit to everybody in the family.* The principle of mutual submission means I am going to leverage my power, my assets and my time for your benefit. I am going look for ways to get up under your burden for your sake out of reverence for Christ, because guess what Jesus did for us. He got up under the burden of our sins and He leveraged His power. He leveraged His resources. He leveraged everything He had going for Him: all of His authority, all of His position, He leveraged it for our sake. He put us first. He died for your sin so you don't have to die for your sins."

Whether it is family, a corporation, or friends, mutual submission is the most powerful relational dynamic there is."
- Andy Stanley (notes from *Future Family, Ep 2 - Power Down*)

<http://yourmove.is/episode/ep2-power-down/>

8. What higher perspective and purpose should this submission have? 5:22b

- What does this say about the limits or parameters of a wife's submission to her husband? (Compare the words that Colossians 3:18b uses to describe the nature/ limits of this submission?)

9. Compare the instructions in Colossians 3:17,23,24. Who are we ultimately accountable to for our service and submission?

10. Why are wives to be subject to their own husbands? 5:23,24

FYI: "Clearly Paul is not saying the woman is inferior to the man, just as Christ is not inferior to His Father. Paul is speaking of a divine order that in context of this letter will create an environment in which the marital partners will be 'diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'" - preceptautin.org

Submit ""The outstanding manifestation of true submission, of course, is seen in our Lord's submitting of Himself to the Father... No one would ever conceive of the idea that Jesus found it a reproach to submit to the Father. He delighted in it. It was voluntary on his part. In no way did he regard it as a threat to the equality which he knew existed between himself and the Father. Therefore, to submit to someone does not mean you are not equal. This is the confusing meaning which the world has poured into this word. Submission does not mean inequality. Literally, it means "put yourself under, arrange yourself under someone, for a good and proper purpose." It is a totally voluntary action.' (Ray Stedman) " - preceptaustin.org

11. What warning is given about marrying an unbeliever? 2 Corinthians 6:14

12. What instructions are given to those already married to an unbeliever?

- 1 Corinthians 7:12-13
- 1 Peter 3:1-4

FYI: "The Fall has introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women... A husband's domination on the one hand and passivity on the other are terrible sins against their wives, families, and the Church...Wives' usurpation of their husbands' headship – or the opposite, servility to his sinfulness – is sin. A wife's submission should be informed by and in accord with the call of Christ.

What about the matter of ungodly headship? The fact that a wife wants to honor her husband's leadership if possible does not mean she will sit in mute silence. Questioning his reasoning or acquainting him with his error is not evidence of a rebellious spirit, but rather of love. Refusing to support his moral folly is not sin. A Christian wife can stand with Christ against her husband with a humble, loving spirit which indicates her longing to honor his headship. The attitude is, of course, key." - R Kent Hughes (185)

13. Mark the words “as Christ” and “as the church” in 5:22-25. What should Christians model in their marriage?

- What did Jesus say branded people as followers of Christ? John 13:34,35 How much of a priority do you think this should be in our marriages and homes?

FYI: “The wife’s special deference to her husband takes its character from the special relationship which binds husband and wife together...analogous to that supernatural relationship in which the Christ is bound to Christ. But if Paul places the duties of wives on such a lofty plane, he rates the obligations of husbands no less ...his duty to love her - with a love which is much more than natural affection or attraction, involving his active and unceasing and self-sacrificing concern for her well-being....

By setting this highest of standards for the husband’s treatment of his wife, Paul goes to the limit in safeguarding the wife’s dignity and welfare. For the love of Christ is a self-giving love: He gave Himself up for His church, and the natural inference is that there is no sacrifice, not even the sacrifice of his life, which a husband should not be prepared to make, if necessary, for his wife.”

- F. F. Bruce

14. Consider the commands listed in question #2. Do any of these commands seem especially meaningful and constructive for marriage?

Applying the Word: If you are married, what constructive thing in word or deed do you think you need to bring to your marriage?

What is one of the best role models you have seen for a marriage? What qualities in that marriage impressed you?

Day 3

Ephesians 5:25-30 NAS

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church

Husbands

15. What instruction is given to the husband in 5:25? (Mark the word *love(d)* in 5:25-33.)

IT'S GREEK TO ME: *gave* – Strong's NT:3860 *paradidomi*; to surrender, i.e. yield up, intrust, transmit

16. List the ways that Christ loves the church.

- 5:25
- 5:26
- 5:27 (cf. 1:4)

17. How challenging is the command given to husbands? What does the parallel between Christ's love for the church and a husband's love for his wife say about the honor God gives to marriage? About the honor He gives to women?

IT'S GREEK TO ME: *Sanctify* Strong's NT:37 *hagiazō*; to make holy, i.e. (ceremonially) purify or consecrate; (mentally) to venerate

"When a husband's love for his wife is like Christ's love for His church, he will continually seek to help **purify** her from any sort of defilement. He will seek to **protect** her from the world's contamination and **protect** her holiness, virtue, and purity in every way. He will never induce her to do that which is wrong or unwise or expose her to that which is less than good. (MacArthur, J: Ephesians. Chicago: Moody Press)" - preceptaustin.org

18. How do you think these instructions were viewed in the context of the culture of Paul's day when a wife was regarded as little more than a piece of property?

FYI: "In Eph. 5:25-30 Paul makes three revolutionary statement about women. First, Paul's teaching style illustrates that men and women are equal. He gives instructions to both. Second, Paul commands the men to love their wives as their own bodies ...The verb (Gk *agapate*) indicates continuous and habitual action (5:25). Third, this love leads to a man's nourishing and cherishing his wife." - The Study Bible for Women (1517)

19. In what other way did Paul explain how a husband is to love his wife? 5:28,29

FYI: "From a Biblical point of view [a man's] wife (like his family) is an extension of his own personality. To treat one's wife as a slave or a chattel does as much damage to a man's own personality as to hers...her welfare is indissolubly bound up with his own." - F. F. Bruce

20. Why does Christ *cherish* the church? 5:30 (Cf. 5:28)

IT'S GREEK TO ME: "cherishes/cares for" NT:2282 *thalpo*; probably akin to *thallo* (to warm); to brood, i.e. (figuratively) to foster:

thalpo: "primarily means "to heat, to soften by heat"; then, "to keep warm," as of birds covering their young with their feathers, Deut 22:6, metaphorically, "to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care," in Eph 5:29 of Christ and the church"
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"As those who are one with [Christ], part of Him, incorporated in Him, the people of Christ are the objects of His special care."
- F. F. Bruce

Applying the Word: How would you explain the difference between the world's idea of headship and God's?

Day 4

Ephesians 5:31-33 NAS

31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.

32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

21. What are the three steps needed to establish a healthy, godly marriage? 5:31

- What does this say about the commitment that a person needs to make when they marry?

IT'S GREEK TO ME: "leave" Strong's *kataleipo* NT:2641, "to leave behind" (kata, "down," leipo, "to leave")

"be joined/be united" NT:4347 *proskollao*; to glue to, i.e. (figuratively) to adhere; "to stick to"
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"Unity is the central principle in marriage...[many] ...are still thinking in terms of their individuality, and so you have two people asserting their rights, and therefore you get clashes and discord and separation. The answer to all that, says Paul, is to understand this great principle of unity." (Lloyd-Jones)"
- David Guzik

22. (The statement in 5:31 is quoted from Genesis 2:24.) What had Adam recognized about his relationship with Eve that gave rise to this statement? Genesis 2:22,23

23. With what dignity and for what roles did God create *both* man and woman? Genesis 1:27-28

- What other role did God give to the woman in Genesis 2:18?

IT'S HEBREW TO ME: (**Helper** = help meet)

help Strong's OT:5828 `ezer (ay'-zer); aid

Meet Strong's OT:5048 *neged* (neh'-ghed); a front, i.e. part opposite; specifically a counterpart, or mate

24. What amazing honor does God give to marriage? 5:32

Digging Deeper

What did Jesus say about marriage? Matthew 19:5,6

25. In 5:33, with what specific words of instructions for husbands and for wives did Paul conclude? (What does this say about our needs as men and women?)

What did Paul write about marriage in Hebrews 13:4-5?

26. What are some subtle ways of being disrespectful? (*For example, how can respect versus disrespect be conveyed when listening to someone?*)

- Why can these “little” things (see Solomon 2:15) be so dangerous/ problematic?

FYI: “There are ‘little’ things that can come in and destroy even the happiest marriage if they are allowed to remain, just as ‘little’ sins (ingratitude, impatience, etc.) may hurt our relationship with the Lord.” - Henry Morris

Applying the Word: Why do you think love means so much to a wife? Why do you think respect means so much to a husband? What is God trying to do?